

Marinko continues to be among area's scoring leaders, ready to push Tigers into post-season

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ALTON – Edwardsville senior guard Jack Marinko has been among the St. Louis area's leading scorers this season, averaging over 26 points per game. On Friday night, Marinko scored 31 in helping to lead the Tigers to a hard-fought 64-55 win over Alton at the Redbirds Nest as Edwardsville swept a three-game Southwestern Conference road stretch.

Tuesday night in the Tigers' 67-42 win at home over O'Fallon, Marinko led Edwardsville with 17 points, one of four Tigers to score in double figures. R.J. Wilson had 15 points, Caleb Strohmeier added 13 and Malik Robinson scored 11.

Marinko thought the Tigers' execution of their game plan was a big key to the win last Friday over rival Alton.

“I thought we went out there and executed the game plan,” Marinko said in a post-game interview. “I thought we played some of the best basketball we've played all year. (Caleb Strohmeier), he did a great job rebounding in the second half, and I thought we closed it out making free throws down the stretch.”

The Tigers bounced back from a 55-50 overtime loss at home to the Redbirds on January 12, and Marinko felt making the free throws at the end — where the Tigers went 12 of 17 in the final quarter — was the difference.

“It's huge, because exactly what happened this time,” Marinko said. “They put us at the line last time, and we were missing some free throws at our place, and this time, R.J. (Wilson), he had a one-and-one; he converted on both. And I thought we didn't miss one from there. So it was good. Good turnout.”

Marinko was held to under his average the last three games coming into Friday night, but he didn't see it as a scoring slump. Instead, he concentrated on other aspects of his game.

“I was still finding my teammates,” Marinko said. “We were running in the same plays, but I was more finding my teammates. They were double-teaming me, so I was just taking what they were giving me.”

Marinko did have a few misses early on, but once he found a rhythm, he was plenty hard to stop.

“I was missing some earlier,” Marinko said, “but I thought I got settled in, and I started playing my type of ball.”

The offense does come naturally to him, but the other parts of Marinko's game stand out as well.

“The offense just comes to me,” Marinko said, “but I'm there to make a play and find my teammates, but I can score when I want to.”

The Tigers swept a crucial three-game road stretch with wins at Granite City, Collinsville, and Alton, and Marinko felt his team handled everything well.

“I thought we entered our three-game road stretch, and I thought we handled it well,” Marinko said. “We won all three on the road, and now we're back for two more at home, and we need to finish out strong.”

And winning on the road after a three-game slump is a big confidence boost for the Tigers entering the IHSA post-season.

“It's a big confidence boost winning on the road,” Marinko said, “especially here; it's one of the hardest places to play. But in practice, after losing a couple in a row, we just kept our focus, and we came out of this road stretch, and we got things done.”

And when the playoffs start, you can expect Jack Marinko to be among the Tigers' leaders as Edwardsville looks to start another run into the IHSA tournament.